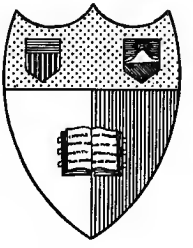

Traders, Farmers, and Agricultural Organisation

An Inquiry into an Alleged Conflict of Interests

BY

EDWIN A. PRATT

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AN INQUIRY INTO AN ALLEGED CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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EDWIN A. PRATT

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TRADERS, FARMERS, AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATION

FROM the earliest days of the movement which has for its main object the organisation of the agricultural industry in the three-fold directions of economical production, cheaper transport, and better marketing, a more or less keen hostility thereto has been shown on the part of manufacturers, of wholesale agents, and of retail shopkeepers, who have seen in it a source of prejudice to their individual interests for which—perhaps not unnaturally—they have felt a greater degree of concern than they have been able to entertain for the welfare alike of agriculture and of the community in general.

This tendency has been developed in almost every country where the now world-wide movement in question has taken root.

In the United Kingdom such adverse criticism of agricultural organisation is still being indulged in, mainly on the grounds of detriment to the interests of private traders by reason of (1) the competition of the societies; (2) the encouragement given to the movement by railway companies; and (3) the making of grants of public money in support, as is alleged, of societies carrying on such competition with private traders, although, as will be shown later on, the propagandist societies here in question are really educational, and not trading, bodies.

These complaints have a bearing on various problems and considerations which directly concern our present economic and social position, and more especially so as regards our ability to face foreign competition, while, even in respect to the interests of private traders, it will be found that, although these could not, in any circumstances, be allowed to stand in the way of the public good, they are likely to be much less seriously prejudiced—so far as they are based on sound and legitimate business principles—than the alarmists and hostile critics suppose.

THE FARMER AND HIS PROFITS.

A farm or a small holding on which commodities are grown for sale, and as a means of ensuring the maintenance of the

grower, is, or should be, the exact equivalent in the agricultural world of a productive factory in the industrial world.

The occupant of such farm or small holding is as much engaged in a *business* as is a manufacturer or a shopkeeper, and he, quite as much as they, requires to study not only receipts from sales, but outgoings in the form of cost of production and transport.

The highest prices he can hope to obtain for his commodities on the market may leave him with no profit if he should have spent too much on raising those commodities and have failed also to take advantage of the lowest available railway rates for getting them to the market.

On the other hand, a poor yield from the market may still leave a profit if costs of production and transport have been kept to a minimum.

Actual market prices are thus only one factor in the situation, though the tendency in the agricultural world has long been to attach undue importance to them as compared with items of expenditure which may be of equal importance when the final balance is struck and the question of profit or loss decided. Farming for pleasure, or the raising of supplies for domestic consumption, is one thing: growing for sale is another; and in the latter case the grower, as a man engaged in *business*, must look not only to incomings, but to outgoings as closely as the manufacturer himself is accustomed to do.

NEED FOR ORGANISATION

These general principles have always been true in regard to the agricultural industry as such; but there came a time when they were of special significance for producers in Europe, and, more particularly, for those in the British Isles.

A vast increase in the quantities of agricultural products imported into Europe was due to (1) the more favourable conditions of those lands—in regard to climate and the possession of great expanses of virgin soil—for the production of enormous crops; (2) cheaper and more rapid ocean transport; and (3) the application of refrigeration for preserving perishable commodities in transit.

Cost of ocean transport has been reduced to an almost negligible quantity. Under existing contracts frozen meat can be brought from Australia to London for nine-sixteenths of a penny per pound, fresh fruit for seven-eighths of a penny per pound, and butter for one halfpenny per pound; while, thanks to refrigeration, such perishable commodities as these arrive in perfectly sound condition, notwithstanding their 11,000 to 13,000-mile voyage.

It was foreign competition and the consequent need for

resorting, as a protective measure, to greater efficiency and economy in the home industry that led, in the 'eighties, to the resort in France, for example, to some of the earliest forms of what has since been known as agricultural organisation. Denmark, crippled by her conflict with Prussia, had then already sought to develop her agricultural resources with a view to opening up an export trade; while Germany had set the world an invaluable example by affording to agriculturists the great advantage of cheap credit through Raiffeisen banks.

Concurrently with such developments as these, agricultural chemistry was undergoing great expansion, and the use of artificial manures and improved machinery, together with the steady substitution of scientific for rule-of-thumb methods of production, increased the need for united action, while the leading industrial centres called more and more for large and regular consignments of produce of uniform quality.

So one country after another reorganised its agricultural conditions on an improved basis, and those that, doing this, had a surplus of production over national requirements, generally sought an outlet for such surplus in this country, competing severely with British and Irish producers on our own markets.

If it were necessary for a country like France to organise her agricultural industry against the competition of North America, the Argentine, and other lands besides, it surely became still more necessary that the British farmer should organise on similar lines when he had to meet not only, in turn, all the countries thus competing with France, but France herself, and most of the other countries of Europe as well.

AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATION AT HOME.

The initial efforts to introduce agricultural organisation into the United Kingdom were made in Ireland, in 1889, by Mr. (now Sir Horace) Plunkett, who, starting with the idea (derived from the Co-operative Congress in 1889) that the economic regeneration of Ireland might be facilitated by means of distributive co-operative stores, soon abandoned it in favour of co-operative dairies, the principle of which he evolved without being aware that it had already been adopted in Denmark. In this way he was the means of starting the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, which has now so widespread a range of activities.

In England the pioneer of the movement was the late Lord Winchilsea, who, following on the holding of the Agricultural Congress in 1892, brought about the formation, in 1894, of a National Agricultural Union, which aimed at the organisation of the various agricultural interests of the country, the creation

of an Independent Agricultural Party in Parliament, and the securing thereby of a programme of agricultural reforms. In 1896 he also established the British Produce Supply Association, Ltd., which opened a depôt in London for the direct sale of agricultural produce to consumers ; but this particular scheme was a failure, and Lord Winchilsea, worn out by his strenuous exertions in the interests of the British farmer, died on September 7, 1898.

A British Agricultural Organisation Society, based on lines akin to those of the Irish Society, was started in 1900, and in 1901 this body and the National Agricultural Union amalgamated and formed the Agricultural Organisation Society of to-day. Mr. R. A. Yerburgh, M.P.,who had been one of the first of Lord Winchilsea's supporters, accepted the position of President, though he agreed to do so only on the understanding that the new society left politics alone, and adopted co-operation as its fundamental principle. The wisdom of this policy has since been abundantly verified, and alike for the initial step thus taken and for much of the very substantial progress made, the A.O.S. (as it is popularly called) is materially indebted to Mr. Yerburgh's guidance and energy.

Subsequent developments in connection with the A.O.S. include the absorption of the Co-operative Banks' Association in 1904, the formation of a separate, though affiliated, Agricultural Organisation Society for Scotland in 1905, and the taking over of the organisation work of the National Poultry Organisation Society in 1909.

FOOD IMPORTS IN 1911.

Reverting, after this historical digression, to the actual need for organisation on the part of the agricultural interests, I might invite attention to the table on page 9 (compiled from the "Trade and Navigation Accounts" for December, 1911), showing the quantities and values of various articles of food imported into the United Kingdom in that year, and throwing further light on the extent of the foreign competition with British producers.

The sum total of the figures in the last column of this table is no less than £132,721,279.

LOWER PRICES AND HOW TO MEET THEM.

In regard to these foreign imports allowance must, of course, be made for the facts (1) that we could not ourselves supply the whole of our requirements even in regard to necessaries to the production of which our climatic and other conditions are adapted ; (2) that some of the commodities in question may

ARTICLES.	QUANTITIES.	VALUE.
Wheat ... ... *Tons*	4,905,454	£38,927,680
Mutton (fresh and refrigerated) ... „	266,873	9,588,646
Beef „ „ „ ... „	368,122	11,136,223
Pork „ „ „ ... „	27,647	1,120,764
Bacon ... ... „	243,437	14,463,414
Hams ... ... „	47,741	2,927,610
Poultry (alive or dead)	—	918,197
Butter ... ... *Tons*	215,148	24,602,111
Cheese ... ... „	117,416	7,139,942
Eggs ... ... *Grt. Hndrds.*	19,057,895	7,965,609
Lard ... ... *Tons*	91,138	4,251,758
Margarine ... ... „	47,220	2,461,325
Apples (raw) ... ... „	166,631	2,232,992
Grapes ... ... „	35,069	785,326
Pears ... ... „	29,289	544,706
Onions ... ... *Bushels*	8,598,722	1,222,278
Potatoes ... ... *Tons*	163,120	1,307,446
Tomatoes ... ... „	68,118	1,125,252

come here at times when, owing to difference in seasons, our own supplies are not ready ; and (3) that it may pay most of our dairy farmers to sell their fresh milk in the towns rather than convert it into butter or cheese.

Yet, even when these allowances have been made, the activity of foreign competition with the British producer on his own markets is beyond all question, and the question as to how this competition can best be met may well be regarded as one of serious concern—for the agriculturist, at least.

ECONOMICAL PRODUCTION.

In the matter of cost of production there is no room for doubt that the average non-organised grower has been paying too high a price for commodities in themselves too often sadly deficient in quality.

Excessive cost has been mainly due to the fact that between manufacturer and consumer there are too many middlemen—agents wholly dependent on their commissions, sub-agents (including farmers or farmers' sons, who supplement their own farming by selling farming necessaries to their neighbours), and retail shopkeepers. Within a radius of five miles of a village in South Wales there were, a few years ago, no fewer than fifty middlemen all netting their commission or making their profits on agricultural commodities they were simply passing on from the manufacturer, or from one another, to the local farmers, who not only had to find the money to keep the whole elaborate machinery going, but must needs add the amount to their "cost of production."

DEFECTIVE QUALITIES.

Then the farmer may be further handicapped by getting, in return for the excessive prices he pays, goods that are deplorably defective in quality, and these conditions have too often been found notwithstanding the material help that many a farmer has derived from assistance extended to him in times of need by sympathetic traders.

Out of 15,000 samples of seed examined in the seed-testing station of the Irish Department of Agriculture, 50 per cent. were officially declared to be "very inferior," while in many cases the samples were "excessively bad." The germinating power was often found to be only 10 per cent., and in some instances it was as low as 3 per cent. Seed of this type may be even worse than useless, for, while failing to yield a sufficient crop, it may lead to the land becoming choked with weeds.

In the trade paper, *Fertilisers*, for December, 1911, a case is reported in which an English firm sued at Castlebar Quarter Sessions eleven local farmers for various sums on account of artificial manures supplied. It was proved, however, that the manures—in which had been found "bits of boards, nails, rags, brown paper, and ropes"—were "simply rubbish," "useless as a fertiliser," and the cases were all dismissed.

The same paper, in its issue for January, 1912, reports the following as the opinion given to the Highland and Agricultural Society by Mr. James Hendrick, Marischal College, Aberdeen, on a sample of so-called fattening cake:—"Though up to the guarantee, the cake is of low quality. It contained too much fibrous, husky material, and too much dirt. Farmers can provide plenty of fibre in their own straw, and sand is always plentiful. It is not necessary to purchase these in the form of cake."

We have here three typical examples, in regard to seeds, manures, and feeding stuffs, of how the farmer has been victimised in having worthless or inferior goods foisted upon him, even when he may have paid for them prices which would still have been excessive even had the quality been beyond reproach.

No *business* in which there is only a narrow margin for profit could possibly be carried on with satisfactory results under such conditions as these, and what the movement for agricultural organisation has sought to do, among other things, has been (1) to establish, as far as possible, direct relations with the manufacturers, thus avoiding the unnecessary middleman and his intermediate profits, and (2) to arrange a system of analyses or tests by which the honest could be distinguished from the dishonest manufacturer, and a guarantee given to the farmer as to the good quality of the commodity he was buying. In this way, there would be a dual reduction in cost of produc-

tion as the farmer would pay less for his necessaries while these would also give better results.

ATTITUDE OF MANUFACTURERS.

At first the manufacturers looked with distrust on the co-operative trading societies. Some of them may not have liked the idea of their commodities being subjected to impartial analysis before they reached the hands of the farmer. Others, whose goods may have been of irreproachable quality, may still have thought—and many of them did—that the new agricultural movement, like others which had preceded it, would soon come to an end, in which case established relations would have been upset and agents offended all to no purpose.

For some such reasons as these the manufacturers generally declined, at first, to open up direct trading with the newly-formed societies which approached them with that design. They referred them, instead, to the " local agents."

The time came, however, when the English societies were so linked up in federations that they were able to give grouped orders for several hundred tons of artificial manures at a time, representing a value of some thousands of pounds. Leading manufacturers who had the opportunity of doing business on this scale with a federation of societies, and of being saved all trouble and all risk of bad debts, were now quite willing to " recognise " the movement in the matter of direct dealings. They realised the fact at last that the movement had really " come to stay " ; and all that is now further wanted in this direction is that manufacturers in general should adopt the societies as their agents in districts where individual intermediaries, absorbing unnecessary commissions and raising prices accordingly, are no longer required.

POSSIBILITIES OF THE SITUATION.

If the grower can save the middleman's profits; if he can have an absolute guarantee of the good quality of the necessaries he buys; and if, by means of agricultural credit societies, he is spared any excuse for running into debt with the traders or for raising loans from them, his own position will be greatly improved. But these results can only be secured by his resorting to combination on lines akin to those adopted by his foreign competitors.

FARMERS' RIGHTS TO TRADE TERMS.

Whatever may be the degree of ill-favour with which the middleman trader regards the loss to himself of these intermediate profits, the question arises, not only whether the

farmers can really afford to provide him with such profits, but, also, whether they have not an actual right to trade direct with the manufacturers on trade terms.

In a very clear and able article published in the *Irish Homestead* of January 20, 1912, it is argued with great force (1) that the farmer who grows commodities for sale on the market is himself, in effect, a "manufacturer"; (2) that the agricultural necessaries he purchases are raw materials required by him for the carrying on of his industry; and (3) that, being himself a trader, he is entitled to buy his raw materials on trade terms—in the same way that other manufacturers do—instead of being expected to buy on retail terms, through a retail shopkeeper, as if he were a private householder growing things for domestic consumption.

If this argument is sound—and it is difficult to see how it can be controverted—then the retail shopkeeper, whether Irish or English, has no right to come between two sets of manufacturers who may be disposed to have direct dealings with one another, and especially so when the agricultural manufacturers not only ask for wholesale terms from the industrial manufacturers, but are able, by means of combination, to give them wholesale orders.

TRADERS' COMPETITION WITH FARMERS.

To the complaint of the retail traders that they are faced by the competition of the farmers' trading co-operative societies it might be replied that in many parts alike of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland the farmers themselves have to meet the competition of traders under conditions peculiarly unfavourable to themselves. With the profits obtained from selling agricultural necessaries to the farmers, many a retail trader in the United Kingdom acquires and farms land on his own account, getting his necessaries on wholesale terms, enjoying, it may be, better facilities for disposing of his produce, and, what is still more important, having a retail business to fall back on and to support him in a bad season when a farmer wholly dependent on his farm or holding might find it impossible to escape failure.

WIDER INTERESTS OF THE RETAIL TRADER.

While, again, the purchase of agricultural necessaries through a society instead of through a retail trader will, to this extent, naturally affect the business of the latter, it does not necessarily follow that he is going to be "wiped out" and that the country towns will be "exterminated." Not only are these

assumptions fallacious, but it may very well happen that both retail trader and country town will, eventually, even be benefited.

If, owing as much to excessive cost of production as to low prices on the market, the farmer or the small-holder cannot make his *business* pay, he must needs abandon the attempt sooner or later. He will then probably follow the example of many a rural dweller before him, and leave the country for the delusive attractions of some large industrial centre. In that case the rural trader who has sought to exploit him loses his custom altogether, and the country town which was to flourish on his patronage knows him no more. They will, between them, have virtually killed the goose that was laying the golden eggs.

Let us suppose, on the other hand, that the growers in a certain district obtain the whole of their agricultural requirements through the co-operative trading societies established for that purpose, and are thus enabled to reduce to economic proportions the cost of producing the commodities they send to market, while the better quality and the greater productiveness of the requirements so obtained have given the best possible return on the money expended.

Let us even suppose that, owing to the societies, this trade has been entirely taken out of the hands of the middlemen, whether agents and travellers wholly dependent thereon or local shopkeepers.

Agents and travellers will then clearly have to look out for employment in some other direction, since their salaries or commission will be saved—to the advantage of everyone else concerned. But, as regards the shopkeepers, while they will certainly lose their trade in agricultural necessaries, they will see the farmers and the small-holders becoming more prosperous on being enabled to increase the difference between cost of production and market prices; and, in just such proportion as the growers have more money to spend, the shopkeepers may expect to do a larger business with them in necessaries and luxuries for the household.

Provided that a rural or country town shopkeeper does a good trade and has the prospect of an increasing turnover, it should be a matter of indifference to him whether his profits are made on seeds, feeding stuffs and artificial manures, or on provisions, draperies and furniture. Even if there should be no actual increase in his profits, he would still have the satisfaction of knowing that something had been done to check the "rural exodus," and to retain for him customers whom he might otherwise lose altogether.

Any falling off in business in some directions should thus be abundantly compensated for by an increase in others, and

in this way the retail trader would really stand to gain rather than lose by the new conditions.

CHEAPER TRANSPORT.

Following the question of cheaper production, as a practical reason for organised effort, comes that of lower transport and the prospect of its attainment through the same means.

Allegations of undue preference in the rates for foreign as compared with home-grown produce have often been made against the railway companies; but, on the principle of one side of a story being good until the other has been heard, it is only fair to hear what the railway people themselves have to say on this particular question.

The position—from their point of view—was well explained to the Departmental Committee on Railway Agreements and Amalgamations on March 15, 1910, by Sir Charles Owens, at that time general manager of the London and South-Western Railway Company. In the course of his evidence, Sir Charles said on this particular subject (Q. 13,013):—

"Let me make the thing quite clear to you with one very simple illustration. I will go back to the case we had, I think in 1895, before the Railway Commissioners, when the South-Western were challenged upon their rates for bacon and cheese from America as compared with the rates which they charged for similar traffic from home stations. I proved in evidence there that the cheese from America came in boxes well-packed, and that we got the maximum loading on our trucks. I found on the contrary that the home cheese was handed to us in a very new condition, and in a soft condition, so that the most we could load in a truck was one layer on the floor of the truck. The different conditions were such that the Railway Commissioners decided that the difference in the rate we were making was right, and was simply a recognition of the different conditions. Then, in the same way, I took the bacon, which comes from America in cases weighing, roughly, about 5 cwt. each, where we again got loads of 10 to 12 tons in our trucks; whereas the great bulk of the bacon we carry from home stations in England is carried in what they call a green condition, and there again we can only put one, or at most two layers on the floor of the truck. Again the Railway Commissioners were amply satisfied that the difference in conditions under which we carried the traffic fully justified the difference in the rate. Therefore, what I would press upon you is that, though there may be different rates, the rates which are charged for foreign produce are always open to home produce if that is sent under similar conditions."

The moral for English producers would seem to be that if they want to get railway rates corresponding to those charged for the foreign imports they must (1) group their consignments in such a way as to take advantage of the lower scales already available for large quantities; and (2) consign under such conditions in regard to packing that the railway companies will be able to load the trucks and handle the produce to the best advantage.

These two essentials can best—if not, in most cases, only—be

secured through the formation of agricultural co-operative societies which will group the consignments of their members and thus enable the "small" grower to benefit from the lower scales of rates the railway companies already offer for home and foreign produce alike.

In my book on "Small Holders: What they must do to Succeed," I have told how, at a meeting of the Newport (Salop) Agricultural Co-operative Trading Society, attended by Mr. Frank Ree, now general manager of the London and North-Western Railway Company, and Mr. J. Nugent Harris, secretary of the Agricultural Organisation Society, the former pointed out that by combining their lots, in order to take advantage of some of the very low rates his company already offered for larger quantities than those they could forward individually, the smaller farmers who were members of the local society could effect a saving of something like 19 per cent. on their payments for rail transport.

Facts of such material importance as these are now coming to be generally recognised by leading representatives of the agricultural interests.

In a paper read at a Congress held at Hexham in October, 1910, Mr. H. H. Mason, editor of *The Fruit, Flower, and Vegetable Trades Journal*, said:—

"It is in the matter of transit that the great advantage of co-operation is so obvious as to admit of no argument. The grievances of market gardeners against the railway companies are chronic; yet the fact is indisputable that the railway companies are not only ready but anxious to make big concessions to growers who will, by means of combination, supply them with bulk consignments. It is clearly to the interests of the railway companies to do so. None of these companies, with the interests of their shareholders at stake, are in a position to accord privilege to growers out of sentiment . . . . It is remarkable to what a large extent the interests of railway companies and raisers of produce are identical."

The issue of *Co-operation*, the official organ of the Agricultural Organisation Society, for October, 1910, has a reference to an affiliated society of small-holders the members of which, acting independently, were consigning their produce, in lots of about half-a-ton, at the rate of 9*s*. 2*d*. per ton, whereas there was a special rate of 6*s*. 3*d*. per ton for 4-ton loads—a quantity which eight senders could have made up—allowing a saving of over 30 per cent. on their payments; while the total saving which the members of this one society might gain, through combination, on the quantities actually consigned by them, worked out at £1,530 per annum.

The following further striking example of possibilities in the same direction comes to me from Mr. W. H. Press, one of the organisers of the Agricultural Organisation Society:—

"As the result of an arrangement between the Cambridgeshire County Council and the A.O.S., I paid a series of visits to that county in the spring

of 1911. The first place I visited was Cottenham, where I found that the small-holders were at a great disadvantage in matters of transport. They were consigning—mostly vegetables—at a rate of 15*s.* per ton to London, for small quantities, and at one of 26*s.* 6*d.* per ton to Manchester. I pointed out to them that there were special rates of 7*s.* 1*d.* per ton to London and 15*s.* 5*d.* per ton to Manchester, which would enable them to effect a material saving if only they adopted the principle of co-operation and grouped their consignments into the stipulated quantities. They acted on my suggestion, a whole season's produce has since been despatched from Cottenham at the lower rates, and the small-holders have expressed the warmest thanks to the A.O.S. for bringing the matter to their notice."

For still another example, reference might be made to the fact that at the annual meeting of the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society in Edinburgh on March 31, 1911, the chairman, Dr. Charles M. Douglas, said :—

"As regards railway rates, I hold most strongly that until the agricultural community combine to avail themselves of the railway rates that already exist on the rate books, it is no use tilting against the railway companies. We have proved that in England and Wales. We find there are rates on the rate books that can be obtained, and obtained only by co-operative effort. To show what can be done, take the case of Worthing. There a number of market gardeners, growing such produce as tomatoes, grapes, etc., combined, and had a conference—brought about by the [English] Agricultural Organisation Society—with the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, and, by reason of their combination, they have been able to obtain concessions that amount to a saving of upwards of £2,000 per annum to the growers in the Worthing district . . . . There are three farmers in the Manchester district who send a similar class of produce twice a week to the Manchester market in individual lots. If they combined and sent it in one lot they would have at the end of the year £200 to divide between the three of them."

Such savings in the cost of transport as are indicated in the examples here given may make no less a difference on the final outcome of the grower's *business* (regarding his enterprise always in that light) than the economies in the cost of production, as already described ; but the material consideration on which emphasis must be put is that in the one case as in the other the savings in question can only be effected by combination.

THE RETAIL TRADER'S ADVANTAGES.

The village or the country town trader may think that he is not concerned in, at least, the savings which producers can effect, if they will, on railway rates. He is, however, very much interested therein, because, if the growers in a particular locality can save, in the aggregate, £1,500 or £2,000 a year on the cost of sending their consignments to market, in addition to the economies they may already have effected in raising their produce, there is so much more money the said growers will be able to spend, whether with the local shopkeepers or otherwise.

In this way we get further evidence of the fact that, although agricultural combination may appear to prejudice the local shopkeeper at the outset, by decreasing his sales of agricultural necessaries, he again stands to benefit eventually (1) through the increased prosperity of his customers, (2) through their greater ability to buy other things, and (3) through the direct encouragement given to them to remain where they are.

Once more, therefore, the conclusion to be drawn is that the retail trader should support rather than seek to check the agricultural organisation movement.

BETTER MARKETING.

If, in addition to effecting economies in both production and transport, agricultural co-operation can lead to better prices being secured for the commodities when these are put on the market, the prosperity of the grower will be still further increased, and there will be still more money available for spending with the local shopkeepers for household or other requirements.

Co-operation is already doing much in the way of this better marketing.

Between the science of producing crops and the art of selling them to the best advantage there is a material difference. The agriculturist who is skilled as a grower may have but indifferent qualities as a man of business, while even if he should possess a fair share of such qualities it might well be to his advantage to devote to farm or holding the time he now spends on attendance at weekly markets or in otherwise finding purchasers for his commodities.

Under the co-operative principle the practice is more and more coming into vogue of the produce from a given district being delivered, or gathered in, to a common centre whence it is distributed, not only in grouped consignments, to ensure the advantages of low railway rates, but to such destinations as may be selected by a secretary or other specially qualified person whose function it is to keep in touch—by telegraph, telephone or otherwise—with all possible markets, and despatch the consignments accordingly. In this way a much wider distribution area is secured; consignment to markets already glutted is avoided; the risk of bad debts is decreased, and the *business* of farming is put on a more business-like footing.

There are societies, also, which have their own co-operative markets or their own auction marts for the sale of cattle or of fruit and market-garden produce, and there are others which undertake the sale of milk, eggs, pigs, cattle, and flowers for their members.

THE FARMER'S THREE-FOLD GAIN.

The farmer who, through co-operation, has thus (1) economised in production, (2) saved on railway rates, and (3) gained on distribution, secures a three-fold advantage which may make all the difference between success or failure in his enterprise, while the retail trader's business, in turn, is, for the reasons already given, put on a sounder footing.

RURAL INDUSTRIES.

Advantage should further be derived by the village or country town shopkeeper from the rural industries that agricultural co-operation is helping to establish, the effect of these industries being to open up fresh outlets for rural labour, and, by offering well-paid positions to the best type of local workers, to retain them in a locality they might otherwise leave for a neighbouring large town.

Among other things which the societies are doing in this direction might be mentioned the re-starting of long-closed mills, for the grinding of members' corn, and the opening of milk depôts, butter factories, cheese factories, and establishments for fruit pulping or vegetable drying, all places of these types being equipped with the latest and best machinery and appliances; the formation of egg-collecting centres; the sending round of a cider-press, owned co-operatively; and the development on co-operative lines of various home industries.

A typical example of what is being done in these directions might be given by way of illustration.

In January, 1911, Mr. Yerburgh, M.P., opened at Chippenham, for a co-operative association of dairy farmers in Wiltshire, known as the Wilts Farmers, Ltd., a milk depôt which is described in the *North Wilts Guardian* of January 13, 1911, as "a modern factory of solid and handsome construction, equipped with a complete up-to-date plant and machinery, the whole probably worth £10,000." The main purposes of this depôt are (1) to form a centre for collecting milk from the members, passing it through cleaners, pasteurisers, and coolers, all constructed on the most scientific principles, and then consigning it to London or some other large city under the best attainable conditions; (2) to safeguard the interests of the members in regard to the sale of the milk; and (3) to retain and convert into cheese surplus milk which would previously have been sent to markets already over-supplied, leading either to waste or to the keeping down of prices. The machinery at the depôt is equal to dealing with 14,000 gallons of milk a day.

Such has been the success of this excellent undertaking

that, in addition to the large sales of milk, the depôt converted into cheese a considerable quantity of surplus milk during the months of May, June and July, 1911. The society closed the year with a membership increased during that period from 159 to 570, whilst the movement is now being taken up in Gloucestershire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire.

In regard to the action being taken by the farmers in Cheshire for the utilisation of surplus milk, *The Times* of February 5, 1912, records the formation of "The Cheshire Milk Producers' Association Depôts, Ltd.," to take over the Balderton milk factory, situated near Chester, as tenants under the Duke of Westminster. A capital of £2,000 is to be raised by the farmer-members on the basis of one shilling for every gallon of their average daily production of milk. The report adds: "The Secretary (Mr. James Sadler) states that the Balderton Factory is likely to be only the beginning of an extended scheme, and that in a few years they may have five or six factories."

CO-OPERATION AND WAGES.

In addition to widening the scope of employment, co-operation should allow of the farmers giving better pay to those already in their service.

Farmers who have a vast army of middlemen living upon them often plead that they "cannot afford" to give their labourers more than what is avowedly a miserable wage; but with the help both of substantial economies and of better market prices they ought to be well able to give higher wages. In that case the labourers, like the farmers themselves, would have more money to spend with the village or country town shopkeepers and greater inducement to resist the attractions of the now better-paid urban labour, so that once more the retail traders should gain. As for the unnecessary agents, their claim to consideration in matters agricultural is, surely, far less than that of the toilers actually engaged therein.

HIGHER WAGES AND BETTER HOUSING.

If, too, the agricultural labourers get better wages, they will be able, not only to spend more on food, clothing and furniture, but to pay better rents for their houses; and this fact, in itself, would go far towards solving that housing question which is one of the most acute phases of the whole rural problem.

It would encourage the building both of more houses and of better houses. The smallness of the rent the average

agricultural labourer is alone able to pay under present conditions leaves scarcely any margin for interest on the cost of construction even of cottages affording wholly inadequate accommodation. If the labourer could be enabled to pay another eighteenpence or two shillings a week, far better provision could be made for him, and one would then hear less about young couples in rural districts being unable to marry because they cannot get a cottage in which to live.

THE REVIVAL OF RURAL LIFE.

All these conditions have a direct bearing on that revival of rural life which, while so greatly to be desired in the interests of the national welfare, must also especially benefit the rural trader, who would be well advised to look at the whole question from a broader standpoint than that of immediate profits.

A good example has been set him in this respect by the policy of the railway companies in their concession of low rates or better facilities to agriculturists with the idea, less of direct gain from a possibly increased traffic in the produce to which those rates and facilities apply, than of improving the economic conditions of the rural districts concerned, in which case the railways might hope to benefit by an improvement in their traffic generally—that is to say, alike in goods and in passenger traffic.

Their principal gain would, in fact, be from a possible "revival of rural life," with all that a railway company might expect therefrom, the lowering of rates or the increase of facilities in regard to agricultural produce being thus only a means to a much greater end, though one in which the public interests are concerned still more than those of the railway company itself.

RAILWAY COMPANIES AND RURAL LIFE.

This particular aspect of railway policy goes back to, at least, the year 1895, when Lord Winchilsea was carrying on with the Great Eastern Railway Company his friendly negotiations in the interests of the farming community. I speak with some knowledge of the facts inasmuch as I was then in direct touch both with Lord Winchilsea (whose aims and purposes it was my privilege to announce to the world in a series of articles contributed to *The Times* in 1895 and 1896) and with the leading officers of the Great Eastern Railway Company. I thus had the opportunity of hearing both sides.

The view taken by the railway company was that, although

the proposals advanced by Lord Winchilsea—and more especially as regarded the sending of boxes of agricultural produce direct from farmer to consumer at exceptionally low rates—were not likely to swell materially the company's revenue, yet anything which improved the position of the rural populations must, apart from the advantage to themselves, bring more traffic to the railway, since the people would be better able to travel and be in a better position to purchase various commodities, for personal or household use, which the railway company might expect to carry. Any increase, also, in housing accommodation, due to increasing population following on a general betterment of the economic position, would mean a greater transport of bricks, timber, and other building materials, the receipts from which would be a further set-off to the low rates granted for agricultural produce.

In corroboration of this view, I might give the following further extract from the evidence of Sir Charles Owens before the Departmental Committee on Railway Agreements and Amalgamations (Q. 13,049) :—

"If there is one trade which we [*i.e.* the London and South-Western Railway Company] and most of the companies have done more than another to try and develop, it is the fruit trade. The Great Eastern and the Great Western, I know, have done a great deal in that direction, and we have developed a most marvellous fruit district in the neighbourhood of Swanwick [Hampshire]. Some twenty-five years ago . . . . a gipsy squatter on a few feet around his ground planted a few strawberries. They were found to grow to remarkable perfection, and he grew more. That was the starting of the great strawberry-growing industry which goes on round Swanwick. We made it our business from a railway point of view to develop it, and this is the result, that the total number of baskets of strawberries conveyed from that district during last year [1909] was 2,948,195, the total weight of the strawberries being 6,585 tons. That is an industry which has been developed in two ways—by our charging rates which leave no margin for profit at all for the conveyance of manure to the district, and by our charging very low rates indeed, which leave but little profit, for bringing the strawberries to the different markets. *The real benefit to the South-Western Company is from the employment and maintenance of a greatly increased population.*"

The passage in Sir Charles Owens' statement which I have here put in italics may help the ever-suspicious farmer to understand why it is that the railway companies—as in the case of Mr. Ree and the Newport (Salop) meeting—are so anxious to impress on growers the fact that they can save money on their railway rates by means of combination.

If in this way a group of producers can save £2,000 a year, or any other such amount, they do so, apparently, to the disadvantage of the railway company, whose sincerity in offering the advice in question may, at first, seem open to doubt. But, apart from the fact that better packing and larger consignments mean also better loading and decreased working

expenses, the real and ultimate benefit to the railway company is derived, as Sir Charles said, from the employment and maintenance of an increased population. So the said advice may be regarded as based, not on insincerity, and not even on an assumption of philanthropy, but on a sound business proposition, and one involving a substantial benefit to everyone concerned.

The examples thus offered by the railway interests—many years before Mr. Roosevelt appointed his "Country Life Commission" and popularised the cry for "The Revival of Country Life"—may be especially commended to the industrial and commercial interests as one for them to follow, in preference to any dependence on immediate profits secured from their customers under uneconomic conditions, and likely, therefore, to prejudice, eventually, both parties alike.

THE SMALL-HOLDER MOVEMENT.

There is the greater reason why the whole question should be looked at from the broader standpoint here recommended because agricultural organisation is essential to the success of the movement for establishing on the land a larger number of small-holders.

If, by reason of foreign competition, agricultural organisation became necessary years ago in the interests of those who were already on the land, the need for it to-day must be still more acute, not only because the foreign competition is keener, but also because of the increasing competition at home between those already on the land and those who are being settled there under the auspices of the State.

In their report for 1910 to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Small Holdings Commissioners state that the Small Holdings Act had, down to the end of 1910, resulted in the provision of land for, approximately, 9,035 applicants in three years, apart from an unsatisfied demand from 8,168 applicants and seven small-holdings associations.

No figures are given to show what proportion of the 9,000 successful applicants aimed at obtaining their whole livelihood from their holdings, by the raising and selling of produce, and what proportion desired a holding simply as an adjunct to some other employment, though the Commissioners say that "practically the whole" of the demand for holdings of the former type has been satisfied.

Whatever the precise number of those who start with the idea of maintaining themselves on the holdings with which they have thus been provided, they naturally swell to that extent the number of English growers who are competing on the market with one another as well as with the foreigner.

CO-OPERATION INDISPENSABLE.

If the system of small-holdings now being fostered by the State is to have the faintest chance of success, then it becomes a matter of paramount importance that the small-holders should have those advantages of economical production, cheaper transport and effective marketing which can only be secured by them through combination.

This necessity will be even greater alike for county council tenants and for peasant proprietors than for tenants under private landowners.

County council tenants protest that they are being called upon to pay far higher rents than they can afford, and they especially object to having to contribute, through those rents, to a sinking fund which will eventually leave the county council owner of their holdings and help forward land nationalisation—at their expense.

Peasant proprietors are faced with the prospect of having to make, for possibly the full term of their working lives, mortgage payments of a kind far less elastic than the rent paid to a landowner content with a 2 per cent. interest, *plus* amenities, and disposed, perhaps, to be generous in bad seasons; while the peasant proprietor will also find that, being a "landowner," with the liabilities as well as the advantages of that position, and being no longer able to trade with a landlord's capital, he must himself provide for things which, under the old conditions, a landlord would have found for him.

If, in addition to one or the other of these two sets of drawbacks, the State-fostered small-holder is, after being provided with a holding on which he proposes to make a living, left to his individual resources in the matter alike of production, of transport, and of sale, his fate will, assuredly, be hopeless.

In buying his own small parcel of agricultural necessaries, of uncertain quality, at an excessive price he will be at the mercy of the middleman, and production will cost him more than it should.

In sending off his own little lot of produce by train as a separate consignment he will fail to get the lowest available railway rates, and will pay for transport more than he might.

In forwarding to a wholesale trader who really wants big quantities of uniform quality, and upon whose returns he can have no check, he may receive less than he ought.

Economically, and as a purely business proposition, he will, in all these circumstances, be doomed to failure.

If, on the other hand—and whatever the final settlement on the vexed question of tenancy *v.* ownership—success in working the small-holdings can be arrived at by means of co-operation, then the existence throughout the country of a series of pros-

perous colonies of small-holders should, among other things, provide additional business for retail traders even though all the agricultural necessaries were bought, through agricultural co-operative societies, direct from the manufacturers; while the manufacturers themselves would find it of advantage to dispense with middlemen and to encourage societies which were not only sending in big orders, but educating their members in the use of the commodities ordered, and so still further increasing the demand.

STATE POLICY.

Finally, there comes the question whether or not the State should give a helping hand to a movement which so closely concerns alike the well-being of what is still the greatest of our national industries and the success or failure of those who have been induced, by Government action, to settle, or to seek to settle, on the land in the hope of gaining, in whole or in part, a livelihood thereon—a movement, also, that is one essentially of a practical nature and has a substantial business backing, these being considerations which, in a commercial country like ours, should confer an even greater degree of importance on such movement, and make it an even greater asset to the nation, than is the case with chambers of agriculture and farmers' clubs whose activities do not, as a rule, extend beyond discussion, however important this, in itself, may sometimes be.

Down to a quite recent period—even if it be not still mainly the case to-day—the attention that Parliament has paid to domestic concerns has been mainly concentrated on problems affecting dwellers in the great commercial and industrial centres.

Controlling so large a proportion of Parliamentary representation, the townsman has been in an exceptionally favourable position to urge his own claims or grievances on sympathetic Governments.

Labour members, especially, returned by the vote of urban workers, are a distinct force in the political world of to-day. No corresponding force of "agricultural members" has yet been created, and there would seem to be good reason for the view expressed at the meeting of the Chester Farmers' Club on February 3, 1912, by Mr. Beecroft, who declared that "when the industrial classes could have their own representatives it was a pity that farmers, with a far greater stake in the country, could not."

TOWN *v.* COUNTRY.

In general legislation, in educational matters, and in social problems, the urban dweller has had an amount of attention from Parliament, from politicians, and from social reformers

out of all proportion to the amount bestowed on the rural dweller. The latter has too often been regarded as having no claim to special legislative consideration, and has been included in Acts applying to the community at large notwithstanding any difference in his circumstances and surroundings. Even when his claim to special consideration has been recognised, the legislation designed for his particular advantage may have been inspired mainly by urban ideas, and be not at all suited to his actual requirements.

EDUCATION, URBAN AND RURAL.

The town-made system of elementary education, for example, has been notoriously full of shortcomings from the rural point of view, while the sharpening of the urban dweller's wits through the State aid extended to numerous colleges, institutions, guilds, and classes set up or established in the towns for the teaching of art, science, and technology, in the interests of industry and commerce, has gone far beyond any corresponding action in regard to rural workers.

In 1887 a Departmental Committee on Agricultural Education, presided over by Sir Richard Paget, found there were then only four or five institutions in England and Wales affording facilities for scientific and technical instruction in agriculture, and they urged that such instruction was "daily becoming more necessary" and that "agriculture had a right to claim that in respect to education the interests of an industry so important should be specially recognised." As the result of this report a grant of £5,000 for agricultural education and research was made by the Treasury in 1888, but, owing to the paucity in the number of schools or classes capable of being aided, the total amount of this grant expended in the first year was only £2,930, though the grant was increased in subsequent years, the total for 1910-11 amounting to £18,840.

The Local Taxation Act of 1890 led to substantial sums being placed at the disposal of the county councils for the purpose of technical—including agricultural—education, and certain of these bodies developed much local activity in organising lectures on agricultural subjects, field trials and experiments, provision of garden plots for instruction purposes, etc. In other counties, however, little was done, while the obligation imposed on the county councils by the Education Act of 1902 of providing for the training of pupil teachers resulted in those bodies having less money available for agricultural education. The amounts allocated by them for such purpose thus suffered a steady decline, notwithstanding the authority given to the county councils to supplement the grants

made to them by the Education Department for technical education by the imposition of a local rate for the same purpose.

In the result the Departmental Committee of 1908 on Agricultural Education, over which Lord Reay presided, reported that in no county could the provision for agricultural subjects be considered to be "fully satisfactory," while in some counties, they said, there was "no provision of any kind." The Committee, nevertheless, found there were then at least twenty-four institutions actively engaged in providing higher agricultural instruction, as compared with the four or five in 1887, and they considered that "the foundations of a national system of agricultural education" had then been laid, though much remained to be accomplished before the subject could be said to have been placed in the condition its importance demanded. The evidence taken by them in regard to the various institutions tended to show, the Committee further said, "that their funds are quite inadequate for the work which really lies at hand. The consequence has been," they added, "that, notwithstanding the progress made in agricultural education and the interest aroused among more advanced farmers, at present the majority have not been reached." In support of this view the Committee alluded to the evidence of the secretary of the Farmers' Club, Mr. H. Trustram Eve, who had told them that the agricultural colleges, however well conducted, did not then directly affect more than 5 per cent. of the farmers of England.

Following on the report of this Committee came the increase in the Treasury grants to the amount already mentioned. The Development Commissioners have now recommended that a considerable sum should be allocated as grants to universities, colleges, societies, farm institutes, etc., in the furtherance of agricultural research and education, while the responsibilities in regard thereto hitherto divided between the Board of Agriculture and the Board of Education have now been assumed by the former body.

Although, therefore, England was, in the past, distinctly behind other countries in regard to agricultural education and research, there is an evident intention now to make up, as far as may be, for lost time, by the resort to a much more energetic policy than heretofore.

COMMERCIAL INTERESTS AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE.

Not only has the urban dweller had an advantage over the rural dweller in such sharpening of wits as follows from technical or other higher education, largely aided by the State, but the question also arises whether the progress made of late years in agricultural science and research has not been of

still greater benefit to the industrial and commercial interests than to the agriculturists themselves. The former have been led by this progress and by their more highly-developed business instincts (fostered alike by the State and with the help of the ratepayers' money) to start companies, set up factories, establish "rings," and employ armies of scientists, workers and agents in the production or sale of artificial manures, feeding stuffs, seeds, and agricultural machinery and appliances, out of which they have probably gained far more advantage than has been secured by the farming community whom it was their purpose, from a business standpoint, less to aid than to exploit.

In the result the agriculturist has been left altogether behind the urban dweller in the facilities afforded to him for becoming a technical expert in his particular occupation in life; yet when it is proposed that he should be aided more by the State there is an outcry from the commercial classes that their own particular interests are in danger.

SHORTCOMINGS OF STATE AID.

Even so far as it has hitherto been granted, the State aid here in question has applied to agriculture as a science rather than as an industry.

It has sought to develop production, but has done comparatively little to facilitate distribution. Growers have been told how to increase their output, and have then been left to dispose of their greater quantities as best they could. Sometimes these have been sent to markets already glutted, and there has been a general fall in prices, of advantage to consumers only. At other times growers have not thought it worth while to gather in their crops at all. This was the case a few years ago with a certain market gardener in Bedfordshire who left his vegetable marrows to rot in the fields, where they were to be ploughed in as manure, because it would not pay him to send them to market. Vegetable marrows were then selling at threepence or fourpence each in London suburbs; yet the Bedfordshire grower could not depend on getting from the wholesale dealers in London even the halfpenny per marrow with which, he declared to a visitor, he would have been quite satisfied.

SCIENTIFIC MARKETING.

It follows from what has just been said that scientific production must needs be supplemented by scientific marketing

if the *business* of agriculture is to be made to pay. The one without the other may even be prejudicial rather than beneficial to the grower's interests by leading to over-production without providing an effective remedy therefor.

Scientific marketing is based on two main principles, (1) better distribution, in order to avoid sending to particular markets already overstocked, and (2) the conversion into marketable commodities—such as cheese, fruit-pulp, cider, dried vegetables and so on—of surplus produce otherwise disposed of unprofitably or else wasted.

To secure these results a two-fold organisation is needed—one that can operate in regard to the markets of the country in general, and one that can arrange for local industries to meet the requirements of local conditions. Each of these systems can be fostered more effectively by voluntary effort through central societies than by the State ; though the State, in leaving such centralised bodies to complete the work it has itself set on foot, is not only warranted in giving them its support, but is ensuring the carrying out of its own policy to a logical and practical issue.

This dual system—the one complementary and essential to the other—will lead to the experts of the societies being in touch (1) with the technical instructors of the county councils, advising them in regard to market requirements in order that the instruction given may be adapted thereto, and (2) with the producers, giving to them also guidance as to the particular directions in which their energies can best be applied.

DEVELOPMENT FUND GRANTS.

Under the Development and Road Improvement Funds Act, 1909, the Treasury was authorised to make grants, or loans, on the recommendation of the Development Commissions, and through a Government Department, to "an association of persons not trading for profit" for, among other purposes, "the organisation of co-operation, instruction in marketing produce, and the extension of the provision of small-holdings," and applications were made by the agricultural organisation societies of England, Scotland, and Ireland respectively for such grants on the ground that all three were purely propagandist bodies, not trading for profit.

In the case of the English and Scottish societies the applications have been approved. In that of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society the matter is still in abeyance, the Irish Council of Agriculture, the body to which the matter had been referred by the Vice-President of the Irish Department of Agriculture, having passed a resolution affirming that any money

available from the Development Commissioners for agricultural co-operation in Ireland should be given to the Irish Department of Agriculture. The objections offered to the making of the grants to the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society were based partly on alleged prejudice to the interests of traders and partly on political grounds.

The approval of the grants even to the English and Scottish societies has not passed without hostile criticism. In commenting thereon, the trade paper, *Fertilisers*, for instance, in its issue of January 6, 1912, says :—"The injustice of using public money to promote societies which will directly compete with private traders must be manifest to anyone who gives the subject the smallest consideration."

But the three bodies in question do not themselves trade for profit and compete with private traders. They engage in an educational work which, as here shown, is to the best interests of agriculture, of the small-holders whom the Government are encouraging to establish themselves on the land, and of the community in general. It is an educational work, too, for which the three societies are better fitted than the Government, since the best teachers of co-operation are co-operators.

In effect, all the education in science, art, technology, economics and business methods which is aided by Government grants increases the power of the persons instructed to compete with the "private trader" in their particular profession or calling. This, indeed, is precisely what happens—or should happen—in the case of urban colleges and technical institutes which, while not themselves "trading for profit," devote themselves to teaching individuals who most assuredly will or should so "trade" in one form or another when their course of instruction has been completed.

PERTINENT QUESTIONS.

So it may be asked—Should the Government, or should the public bodies to which the necessary powers are delegated, refuse to rural communities State assistance already conceded in principle to urban communities? Are the agricultural classes to be regarded as the legitimate prey of the industrial and commercial classes, and are the latter to be entitled to cry "Hands off!" when they think their own particular interests are threatened? Is there to be established—and especially in Ireland—a system of State Protection of the middleman, regardless of all consideration for the welfare of land cultivators or for the economic advancement of the country as a whole?

THE SUBSIDISING OF VOLUNTARY EFFORT.

Admitting—as all political parties are now prepared to do—that the State policy which stops short at scientific, economical and increased production is inadequate, and *must* be supplemented by co-operative effort to secure a more efficient distribution ; and admitting, also, that the application of public funds to the attainment of this end is justifiable, we are still left with the consideration whether the State is warranted in subsidising voluntary bodies to carry on the necessary propagandist work instead of doing that work itself.

In the absence of these voluntary bodies the State would have no alternative but to create a Government Department, with all the machinery essential thereto, for teaching agricultural co-operation ; but the voluntary bodies already exist, and the question that arises is whether the State should recognise and strengthen the machinery now working, or set up fresh machinery of its own.

From the point of view of economy, the adoption of the former of these two alternatives would seem to be preferable ; and it must be regarded as no less so from the point of view of public policy. Experience in India, in Hungary and in various other countries has shown that when the State has itself sought to guide and direct agriculturists in regard to co-operative action, the tendency has been for the people concerned to depend more and more on State aid, and become " demoralised " accordingly. On the other hand, the very basis of co-operative effort is " self-help and mutual help," and the results in this direction will, assuredly, be far more satisfactory when the work is done by voluntary effort, aided by the State, than when it is directly undertaken by the State itself.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

To summarise the general argument I have here advanced, and to state briefly the conclusions to which I consider this argument leads, I would say—

(1) That effective organisation, on co-operative lines, and more particularly in regard to production, transport, and sale, is indispensable to the well-being of British agriculture and of paramount importance for the small-holders whom the State is encouraging to settle on the land.

(2) That while the really *unnecessary* middleman will assuredly have to go, the legitimate interests of other traders, whether manufacturers or retail shopkeepers in villages and country towns, will eventually be advanced rather than injured

as the result both of direct dealings between the manufacturers and the societies and of the "revival of rural life" that will naturally follow the improvement of rural conditions.

(3) That, inasmuch as the agricultural organisation movement is pre-eminently calculated to confer great advantages alike on agriculture and on the nation, the State is abundantly justified in extending to it a generous support, and should not be restrained therefrom by undue consideration for ill-founded prejudices, individual interests, or political partisanship.

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